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ABSTRACT

The process of assimilating continuing education into a university academic department was studied. A systematic theoretical framework was constructed to guide the study. It was proposed that the perceptions of department chairmen are one of the driving and/or restraining factors related to the degree of departmental participation in continuing education. Data supported the existence of differences in perceptions by chairmen of high participating and those of low participating departments in the University of Missouri system on certain select differential continuing education factors (internal and external relations, instructional staff, administration and organization, curriculum, financial policy, research activities, role of the university). (LY)

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PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT
CHAIRMEN AS RELATED TO THE DEGREE OF
PARTICIPATION OF UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS IN
CONTINUING EDUCATION

Summary of
Ph.D. Dissertation
University of Nebraska
by
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PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT CHAIRMEN
AS RELATED TO THE DEGREE OF PARTICIPATION OF UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENTS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

LARRY A. HALE

University of Nebraska, 1969

The process of assimilation of continuing education into a university academic department was studied. A systematic theoretical framework was constructed to guide the study. It was proposed that the perceptions of the department chairmen are one of the driving and/or restraining factors related to the degree of departmental participation in continuing education. The data supported that there were differences in the perceptions of the chairmen of high participating and those of low participating departments on certain select differential continuing education factors.

The assimilation of continuing education into an institution of higher learning is a complex process and has not been completed.

University academic disciplines are becoming increasingly involved in continuing education. However, widespread differences presently exist in the amount of participation by university academic departments in continuing education. Why is there a wide difference in the degree of academic department participation in university continuing education? This study was made to give some insight into the proposition that the perceptions of academic department chairmen of select differential continuing education factors is one of the elements related to the difference in the degree of participation of university academic departments in continuing education.

This investigation examined the perceptions of academic department chairmen of the University of Missouri including Columbia, Kansas City, Rolla, and St. Louis campuses in relation to the degree of participation of the university academic departments in continuing education.

Theory

Due to the lack of any general theories regarding the full assimilation of continuing education into an institution of higher learning, and especially to the absence of extensive research or theory in regard to the role played by academic chairmen in this assimilation process and the influence of their perceptions of the subject, a theoretical framework was constructed to guide this study. To develop a systematic theoretical framework, two major assumptions and a postulate were stated. From these necessarily tentative assumptions the theory proceeded to a general proposition which was converted into a more precise and testable hypothesis.

Assumption I:

There are many elements related to the assimilation of continuing education into an institution of higher education.

Assumption II:

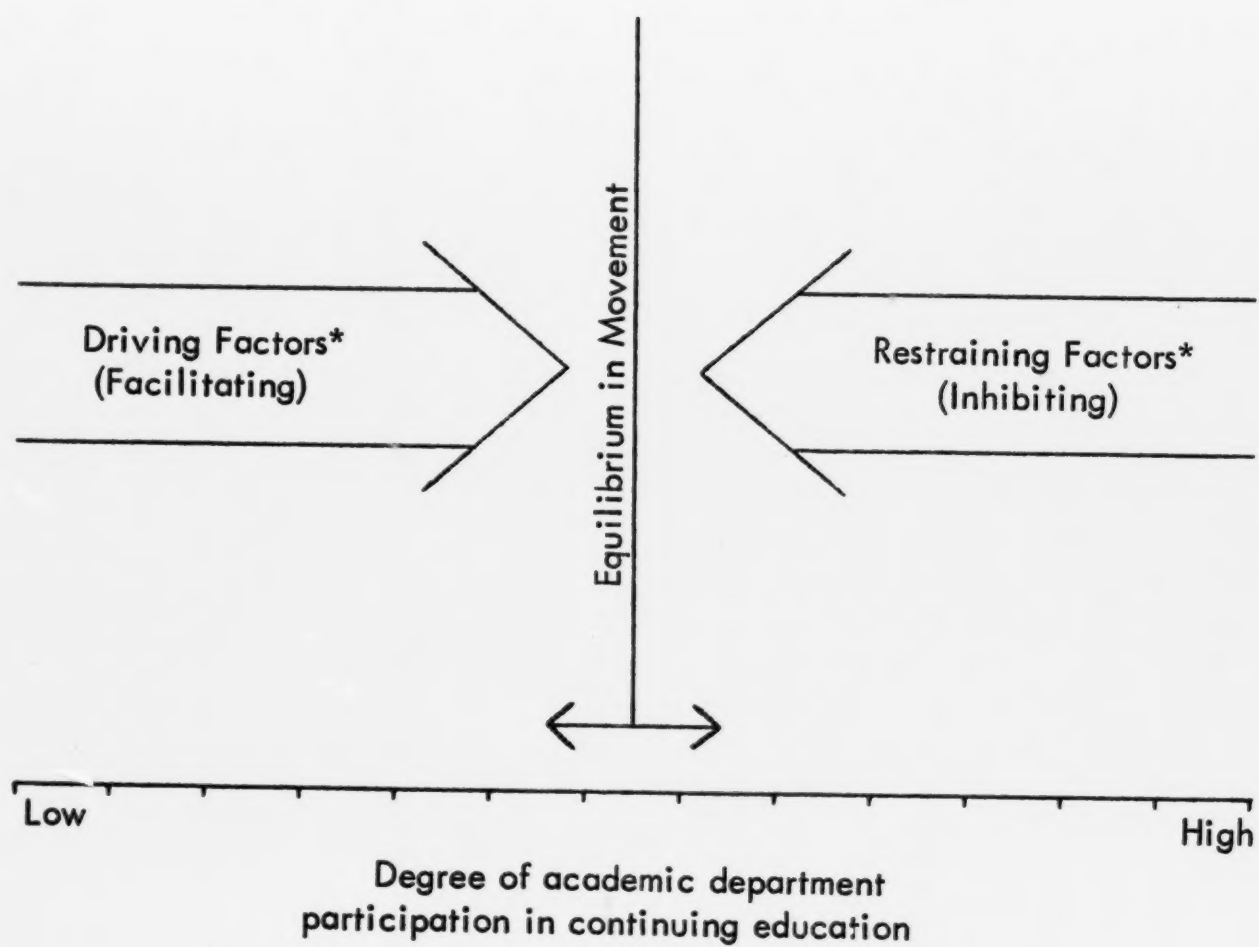
One of the manifold elements which plays a significant part in the complex process of the assimilation of continuing education into universities is the participation of the individual university academic departments in continuing education. Widespread differences presently exist in the amount of participation by these academic departments. Complete assimilation of continuing education into an institution of higher education can be achieved only insofar as all of the university academic departments make continuing education an integral function of their discipline.

Postulate IIA: The participation of an academic department in university continuing education is in itself a very complex process. Lewin's force field concept of social equilibria and social change was used as a basis for the construction of a model to aid in the explanation of this assumption. (See page 3). The model emphasized that the assimilation of continuing education into an institution of higher education and the degree of participation by the departments in continuing education at a given time is maintained by a balance of driving and restraining forces (factors) which are continuously present and functioning.

The foregoing basic assumptions, postulate, and Lewin's force field concept provided a theoretical framework and starting point from which to proceed to a proposition regarding the participation of university academic departments in continuing education.

Model

Assimilation of Continuing
Education into a University
Academic Department



*Factors related to the degree of university academic department participation in university continuing education.

Proposition:

It was proposed that the perceptions of the university academic department chairmen are one of the driving and/or restraining factors related to the degree of university departmental participation in continuing education. The theoretical bases of this proposition are that: 1) The perceptions of an individual have an effect on that individual's behavior; and 2) the academic department chairman, with his perceptions of university continuing education, as "head" administrator of the department will have an influence on the allocation of the departmental staff time committed to university continuing education, and consequently an influence on the degree of departmental participation in university continuing education.

The above proposition was employed as a hypothesis and tested against the data collected on seven select differential continuing education factors.

Basic Hypothesis: H_1

There is a difference in the perceptions of the chairmen of high-participating and those of low-participating university academic departments in continuing education.

Data

Two types of data were required to test the above hypothesis. First, it was necessary to obtain data in order to categorize the academic departments into degrees of participation in university continuing education. Second, it was necessary to obtain data that would reflect the perceptions of the academic department chairmen of select differential university continuing education factors.

The academic departments were categorized into high, medium, and low degrees of participation in continuing education. The 25 percent of the academic departments with the highest degree of participation were categorized as high participating, the 25 percent with the lowest were categorized as low participating, and the 50 percent in the middle were categorized as medium participating departments. The above categorization was based on the rationale that: 1) This study was concerned with extremes in response; 2) the 25 percent high participating and 25 percent low participating departments gave a sample size that yielded workable data; and 3) there was a lack of uniform quantitative measures of the exact degree of departmental participation in university continuing education.

A self-administered questionnaire was constructed to collect the data needed to reflect the perceptions of the academic department chairmen of university continuing education. The questions were constructed around the critical factors predominant in the literature, pre-test interviews, and those suggested by a jury of six continuing education professionals. The critical areas tested in the hypothesis and included in the questionnaire were:

- a. University's continuing education role
- b. University continuing education internal and external relations
- c. Research and continuing education relationships
- d. Continuing education administration and organization
- e. Personnel
- f. Curriculum
- g. Financing

The self-administered questionnaire was mailed to the 172 University of Missouri academic department chairmen. One hundred and forty-two (82.6 percent) responded with 129 questionnaires completed and usable.

There were 32 academic departments classified as High in their degree of participation in university continuing education, 65 were classified as Medium participation departments, and 32 were classified as Low participation departments. The low participation category included in addition to departments that were low, those with no appreciable participation in university continuing education.

Analysis of the Data

The amount of departmental staff time devoted to university continuing education was one of the criteria used in the determination of the degree of department participation in continuing education, assuming the ability of the department chairmen to influence the affairs of their departments, including the allocation of time of the department staff. Therefore, a question was asked in the introductory section of the questionnaire to determine if the academic department chairman perceives that he provides leadership in the allocation of the time of his staff. Responses revealed that 88.4 percent of the 129 department chairmen did perceive that a function of their position in the university was to provide such leadership.

1. Testing the Hypothesis

In the following critical areas, the data supported a statistically significant difference between the perceptions of the chairmen of the high and low participating academic departments.

A. University Continuing Education Internal and External Relations

1) Job related contact. There was a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of the chairmen of the high and low participating academic departments of their rate of job-related contacts with university continuing education personnel. The chairmen of the high participating academic departments reported a higher rate of contact with university continuing education personnel than that reported by the chairmen of the low participating departments.

2) Level of acquaintance. The chairmen of the high participating academic departments reported that they knew more continuing education personnel on a first name basis than did the chairmen of the low participating academic departments. The median number of continuing education personnel known on a first name basis by the chairmen of the high participating departments was 6.4. The median number of continuing education personnel known on a first name basis by the chairmen of the low participating departments was only 2.4.

3) Quality of communications. Communications between the academic department and continuing education personnel outside the department but of the campus were evaluated as being of higher quality by chairmen of high participating departments than by chairmen of low participating departments.

4) Attitude of the dean of continuing education and/or extension. A higher percent of the chairmen of the low participating departments than those of the high participating departments indicated that the dean of continuing education and/or extension of their campus should have a "same-as-campus," or "missionary zeal" attitude.

5) Level of participation in university continuing education. The chairmen of the high participating departments perceived that their department's level of participation in university continuing education programs was higher than the level perceived by chairmen of the low participating departments. This provided support to the reliability of the department participation categorization process incorporated in this study.

B. University Continuing Education Administration and Organization

1) Growth Cycle. The chairmen of the low participating departments perceived that the continuing education organization of their campus does not currently occupy the growth cycle stage that the organization should occupy. They described the current position as "autonomous," but indicated that it should be "assimilation."

2) Advisory Committee. A higher percentage of the chairmen of the high participating departments than of the low participating departments indicated that their departments had representatives on a faculty advisory committee for continuing education.

C. University's Continuing Education Role

1) Explicit university continuing education guiding principles or objectives. A higher percentage of the chairmen of the high participating academic departments than the chairmen of the low participating academic departments were aware of university continuing education guiding principles or objectives.

II. The Statistically Non-Differentiated Perceptions of the Academic Department Chairmen

This section presents the critical areas where there were not statistically significant differences in the perceptions of the chairmen of the high and low participating departments. The following summary represents responses by the 129 department chairmen.

A. University Continuing Education Internal and External Relations

1) President's attitude. The 129 academic department chairmen perceived the attitude of the president of the university toward continuing education as "very favorable." None perceived that the president's attitude was "skeptical" or "more or less against" continuing education.

2) Campus chancellor's attitude. A majority of the academic department chairmen perceived the campus chancellor's attitude as "very enthusiastic" toward university continuing education. None perceived the chancellor's attitude as "skeptical" or "unfavorable."

3) Teamwork. Almost 25 percent of the chairmen indicated that those from their campus who work in continuing education operate as though they are separate from other university educators.

4) Use of publicity. Fifty-five percent (55.0) of all the academic department chairmen "strongly agree" that a carefully planned program of publicity should be used to bring the university continuing education programs of their campus to the attention of the public. None "strongly disagree" with the use of publicity and only one (1) chairman indicated "disagreement."

5) Progress and future of university continuing education. The perceptions of the chairmen of the high and low participating academic departments were not significantly different on the progress and future of university continuing education from their campus. Over two-thirds of the 129 department chairmen indicated "good progress thus far, and future looks good" for university continuing education.

B. University Continuing Education Administration and Organization

1) Appointment arrangement. The academic department chairmen indicated that the "split appointment" was the most desirable arrangement for staff members working in university continuing education. Less than 15 percent indicated that "full time continuing education" was the most desirable appointment arrangement.

2) Organizational structure. Over two-thirds of the 129 academic department chairmen perceived that "each academic department and a central continuing education department coordinate in the administering, planning, executing, promoting, and sustaining of the continuing education programs" was the best way for their campus to organize for continuing education. Almost 25 percent indicated that "a central university continuing education department to administer, plan, execute, promote, and sustain the continuing education programs independently" was the best organizational structure. Less than 3 percent indicated that "each university academic department" should "administer, plan, execute, promote, and sustain its own continuing education programs independently."

3) Current growth cycle stage. Thirty-one percent (31.0) of the chairmen felt that "the continuing education function is recognized as a legitimate university concern and the continuing education unit is accepted as a peer in the university family (assimilation)." Over 25 percent indicated that "a separate autonomous continuing education unit in the university (autonomy)" best described the current continuing education organization growth cycle stage on their campus.

4) Ideal growth cycle stage. Almost fifty-four percent (53.5) of the chairmen perceived that the continuing education organization of their campus should occupy a position in which "the continuing education function is recognized as a legitimate university concern and the continuing education unit is accepted as a peer in the university family (assimilation)."

5) Advisory committee. Almost one-third of the chairmen perceived the existence of a continuing education faculty advisory committee on their campus. Forty-five percent (45.0) of the chairmen who indicated the presence of a continuing education faculty advisory committee also reported that their department was represented on the committee. Almost two-thirds indicated that there was a need for a continuing education faculty advisory committee.

C. University Continuing Education Personnel

1) Approaches. Over forty percent (40.1) of the responses by the academic department chairmen indicated that "campus-based personnel working over a specific geographic area of the state" was the most effective approach in extending the university continuing education programs to the people. Almost 30 percent indicated "people come to the campus to participate in continuing education programs," and almost 23 percent indicated "off-campus based personnel who relate with the academic resources of the campus" as the most effective approach in university continuing education.

2) Staff resources. Almost sixty percent (58.1) of the chairmen felt that the proportion of their campus staff resources devoted to continuing education should increase.

3) Competence of the personnel. Sixty-two percent (62.0) of the chairmen perceived that the competence of the continuing education personnel was "neither higher nor lower" than the competence of the residence research and teaching faculty to represent the university. The data indicated that 21.8 percent perceived that the competence of the continuing education personnel was "lower" or "much lower," while only 3.1 percent indicated that the competence of the continuing education personnel was "higher" or "much higher" than the residence research and teaching faculty.

4) Appropriateness of methods. The department chairmen ranked a list of methods in order of their appropriateness to be used in university continuing education. The overall ranking of the continuing education methods by the 129 academic department chairmen yielded "conference, institute, or workshop" as the most appropriate method for the university to use in continuing education. "Non-credit class" was ranked as the second most appropriate method, and "credit class" was ranked as the third most appropriate method for the university to use in continuing education. "Museum" was ranked as the least appropriate method, with "presentation" and "consultation," in that order, next to the least appropriate to use in university continuing education.

5) Source of instructors. The 129 academic department chairmen ranked the sources of university continuing education instructors according to appropriateness in the following order: Best source, "University of Missouri faculty members;" next best source, "other universities and colleges;" third best source, "business, industry, and other community agencies." The least appropriate source of university continuing education instructors was "high school faculty members."

6) Instructor approval. Fifty-one and two-tenths percent (51.2) of the chairmen indicated that an "authorized academic department representative" should make the approval of continuing education instructors recruited from sources other than regular university faculty. Forty and three-tenths percent (40.3) favored a combination of an "authorized academic department representative" and "continuing education administration" to make the approval, and only 3.1 percent felt that "continuing education administration" alone was the best source of instructor approval.

D. University Research and Continuing Education Relationships

1) Research emphasis. Almost two-thirds of the chairmen perceived that there should be an "increase" in the emphasis on research relevant to university continuing education.

2) Research conducted. Nearly thirty-six percent (35.7) of the academic department chairmen indicated that members of their faculty and/or graduate students had conducted research relevant to continuing education in the last year.

3) Sponsor of research. Over thirty-five percent (35.4) of the chairmen responses supported that the "continuing education division" should sponsor the continuing education research on their campus, while 33.6 percent supported that the "academic departments" should sponsor the continuing education research on their campus.

4) Kinds of research needed. Only 1.6 percent of the chairmen favored "pure or basic" continuing education research as the kind needed. Forty-two and five-tenths percent (42.5) indicated "applied" research as the kind needed, and 46.5 percent felt that a combination of "pure or basic" and "applied" research should be done relative to university continuing education.

E. University Continuing Education Curriculum (credit and non-credit programs)

1) Program emphasis. Seventy-six and seven-tenths percent (76.7) of the 129 academic department chairmen's responses favored a combination of the "improvement of the community" and "development of the individual" as the most desirable emphasis in university continuing education programs of their campus. Over fifteen percent (15.5) of the responses indicated that the "development of the individual" alone was the emphasis that should be made in university continuing education programs, while only 2.3 percent of the responses indicated that the "improvement of the community" alone was the desirable continuing education program emphasis.

2) Program planning. Over forty percent (41.7) of the responses made by the 129 department chairmen were in support of the "authorized academic department representative" as the planner of university continuing education programs. Thirty-six and two-tenths percent (36.2) of the responses were for the "continuing education department representative" and 17.5 percent of the responses were for "recipients (students)" as the university continuing education program planners.

3) Adaptability of the academic disciplines. The department chairmen rated the University of Missouri academic disciplines on their relative difficulty in adaptation to continuing education, and these ratings were converted to ranks. The overall ranking yielded "Social and Community Services" as the least difficult academic discipline to adapt to university continuing education. "Business and Public Administration" ranked second, and "Education" was third. "Dentistry" was ranked as the most difficult, "medicine" was second, and "pharmacy" ranked third.

4) Source of needs identification. Over forty percent of the responses made by the department chairmen emphasized that continuing education programs should be based on needs expressed by the "general public and organized groups."

5) Program orientation. Over two-thirds of the chairmen perceived that the continuing education programs of their campus should be built around a combination of "real-life problems of individuals and society" and the "academic organization of knowledge."

6) Recipients. Almost one fourth (23.2) of the responses made by the department chairmen indicated that the recipients of university continuing education programs should be the "general public." Fourteen and six-tenths percent (14.6) indicated that the recipients should be "professional," and 12.5 percent indicated that the recipients of university continuing education programs should be "managerial."

7) Teaching difficulty. According to the data, university continuing education constitutes a more difficult teaching situation than does resident teaching. Over fifty-five percent (55.8) of the 129 department chairmen gave this indication, while 6.2 percent perceived that university continuing education is an "easier" teaching situation than resident teaching.

F. University Continuing Education Financing

1) Level of enrollment fees. Over forty percent (40.3) of the department chairmen indicated that enrollment fees for continuing education non-credit classes should be "no different" than fees for resident credit courses.

2) Pay scale. Almost eighty percent (79.8) of the department chairmen felt that the pay scale for teaching in university continuing education should be "no different" than the resident teaching pay scale.

3) Source of finances. Twenty-two and nine-tenths percent (22.9) of the responses made by the chairmen were for "tuition fees," 20.9 percent were for "state appropriations," 18.0 percent favored financing by "the group or institution desiring the program," 15.6 percent were for "grants," 12.7 percent were for "federal funds," and only 7.3 percent were for "county appropriations" as the source of finances for university continuing education programs.

4) Level of tuition fees. The percentage of continuing education funds from tuition fees (self-supported) should be "the same as" the percentage of funds from tuition fees for resident education according to 41.0 percent of the respondents. Just over twenty percent perceived either that continuing education fees should be "higher than" or that they should be "lower than" resident fees.

5) Percentage of funds from tuition fees. Thirty-two and six-tenths percent (32.6) of the chairmen did not respond when asked what percentage of university continuing education funds should come from tuition fees (self-support). Eighteen and six-tenths percent (18.6) indicated that 50-59 percent of the university continuing education funds should come from tuition fees, and 14.7 percent indicated that 20-29 percent of the university continuing education funds should come from tuition fees.

G. University's Continuing Education Role

1) Focus(es) of university continuing education. "Academic" received 33.1 percent of the responses made by the department chairmen as the focus for university continuing education programs of their campus. Almost thirty-three percent (32.8) were for a "vocational" focus for continuing education programs of their campus.

2) Credit versus non-credit. "100% credit" university continuing education programs by their campus were acceptable to only 2.3 percent of the chairmen, while 12.4 percent favored "100% non-credit." Twenty-three and three-tenths percent (23.3) favored "25% credit - 75% non-credit." Thirty-one percent (31.0) were "undecided" on the issue of credit versus non-credit university continuing education programs of their campus.

3) Overall emphasis. Sixty and five-tenths percent (60.5) of the chairmen indicated that their campus should place its emphasis, in the overall activity in university continuing education, on "study and change society;" 9.3 percent indicated "change society;" and only 3.9 percent indicated "study society."

4) Responsiveness. The "recipients (students)" received 41.9 percent of the responses when the chairmen indicated which groups their campus should be most responsive to in its continuing education programs. Thirty and three-tenths percent (30.3) of all responses were for "the local community," and 12.8 percent indicated that continuing education programs of their campus should be the most responsive to "the faculty and academic tradition of the university."

5) Percentage of all continuing education assumed by the public universities. Nearly thirty-nine percent (38.8) of all the academic department chairmen were "undecided" about the percentage of all continuing education that public universities should assume. Over fifteen percent (15.5) favored the assumption of "80%" of all the continuing education done by institutions and groups; 12.4 percent indicated "50%;" and 10.1 percent indicated "70%."

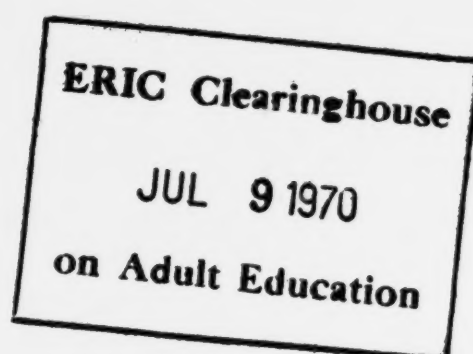
6) University's responsibility for continuing education. The chairmen ranked "public universities" first in responsibility for continuing education, "public colleges (teachers, etc.)" as the second most responsible, and "private universities" as third in responsibility for continuing education. "Religious groups" and "labor unions" were perceived to have the least amount of responsibility for continuing education.

H. Other: Appropriateness of Names (Titles)

Over thirty-seven percent (37.2) of the chairmen perceived that "Continuing Education" was the most appropriate name for the university function of providing its resources to the people of the state, and 18.6 percent favored "Extension and Continuing Education" as the most appropriate name.

Conclusion

It was concluded that the data of this study supported the basic hypothesis relating the perceptions of the department chairmen and the degree of departmental participation in university continuing education to the extent that there were differences in the perceptions of the chairmen of the high and low participation university academic departments in continuing education on certain of the select differential continuing education factors.



Source: Ph.D. Thesis by the same title, Larry A. Hale, University of Missouri Extension Division. Original Thesis on file University of Nebraska Library.